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UN: SOVIETS INCREASE PRESSURE FOR GDR PARTICIPATION
IN STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE

The fate of the UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (June 1972) is in some doubt as the result of Soviet insistence that the German Democratic Republic be permitted to participate on the same basis as the Federal Republic of Germany. Soviet maneuvering on this issue may heighten possibilities of a direct US-Soviet confrontation over GDR participation as well as force Moscow to make a difficult choice between supporting the East Germans or leaving the People's Republic of China a free field at Stockholm, now that Peking has decided to attend.

ABSTRACT

Soviet threats to boycott the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment have become more believable as a result of their withdrawal, along with the Czechoslovaks, from all participation in preparations for the meeting. While Soviet actions can be viewed as a tactical maneuver, Moscow may not be bluffing after all. What is more, fear of such a boycott is already eroding the confidence of a number of supporters of the conference, both here and abroad, who can be expected to put increasing pressure on the US to reach a compromise with the Soviets on GDR participation. Thus the Swedes as well as UN Secretary General Waldheim himself are speaking of the need for reaching some accommodation on this issue in order to avoid jeopardizing the conference. Failing that, Waldheim has suggested postponing the meeting for a year as the only alternative.

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While these circumstances may enhance Moscow's bargaining position, the Soviets, too, face a number of problems as a result of their current policy. Of particular importance here is the decision by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to attend the conference. Can the Soviets afford to leave such a potential propaganda forum to the Chinese? On the one hand, current Soviet détente policy in Europe dictates adhering to its position of full support for the GDR in order to appease the East Germans and keep them in line. On the other hand, in the broader context of Sino-Soviet rivalry, Moscow will have great difficulty in choosing between China and the GDR.

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Moscow's threat to boycott the UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (June 1972) unless the GDR (German Democratic Republic) is allowed to participate on the same basis as the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) has raised fears in many quarters about the fate of this meeting. What is more, the recent Soviet withdrawal, along with Czechoslovakia, from the conference preparations has heightened possibilities of a direct US-Soviet confrontation over the ticklish issue of GDR participation.

Soviet Position Consistent.

As early as June 1971 the Soviets had indicated that they were "deadly serious" about full GDR participation in the Stockholm Conference. Any failure to achieve their objective would thus oblige them to reconsider participating in the conference. On the other hand, Soviet officials seemingly sought to mollify US objection to full GDR participation by suggesting that "modalities" could be devised that would do justice to the GDR as well as still accommodate US reservations on this point.

The heart of the issue revolves around preservation of the "Vienna Formula". The Vienna Formula stipulates that only members of the UN, parties to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), specialized agencies, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) can be invited as full participants to UN meetings of the type of the Stockholm Conference. But at the September 1971 New York meeting of the Preparatory Committee on the Stockholm Conference the Western allies sought to circumvent the problem of GDR participation by agreeing to a US proposal to invite the East Germans as expert technical advisers (without being specifically named) under the conference's rules of procedure. This gambit met with a solid Soviet rebuff. The resultant deadlock over this issue in the Preparatory Committee for Stockholm led to its being referred back to the General Assembly for a decision.

Meanwhile, the US and others held many discussions with the Soviets in an effort to reach a compromise arrangement for GDR participation. Throughout, however, Soviet officials maintained their opposition to the Vienna Formula, advocating either an "all states" or "member states of the UN" formula, and insisted on full GDR equality with the FRG. Finally, the Soviets even proposed that the decision on sending invitations as well as the conference itself be postponed if no solution were found before the end of the current General Assembly session.

These protracted and apparently fruitless discussions eventually found the General Assembly approving the retention of the Vienna Formula as part of the resolution on the UN Conference on the Human Environment by an overwhelming margin (104-9-7). This victory came in the wake of a defeat of two Soviet-

sponsored amendments to modify the resolution (a) by adding the phrase "and other interested states" to the Vienna Formula (43-57-20); and (b) by postponing the conference and the decision on participation (17-70-29).

Stepped-Up Boycott Pressure.

Even before the final vote was taken on the above resolution, the Soviet, Czechoslovak, and Hungarian delegates warned the other delegations that passing the Vienna Formula would oblige them "to reconsider their participation in the conference". The Yugoslav delegate made a similar announcement.

Subsequently, the Soviets and Czechoslovaks made good on their threat and did not participate in the early January 1972 session of the IWG (Intergovernmental Working Group), which is currently working on the important conference declaration. In absenting themselves, the USSR and Czechoslovakia justified their decision on the grounds that the "imperialist forces" had rejected the socialist demand that independent states such as the GDR, North Korea, and North Vietnam should be allowed to attend.

Weakening by UN Secretary General....

According to a January 6 press report from Geneva, Conference Secretary General Maurice Strong (a Canadian) called off a scheduled visit to Moscow and Prague when the Soviet and Czechoslovak governments informed him that his visit would be "inopportune" at the present time. This cancellation and the Soviet boycott threat have worried Strong to such an extent that he has urged UN Secretary General Waldheim to intervene with the Big Four (minus the PRC) to solve the Stockholm invitation issue. Strong also urged that the Secretary General consider requesting a special Assembly session to amend the General Assembly formula by adding a GDR clause to the existing participation formula. On January 12 Waldheim suggested to US Ambassador Bush that either arrangements be worked out so that the GDR could attend, or that the conference be postponed for a year. He urged Bush to contact the UK but said nothing about the USSR and France.

...and the Swedes. Although officially optimistic, the Swedes see a real threat to the usefulness of the entire conference were the Soviets and other Eastern Europeans to absent themselves because of the retention of the Vienna Formula. The Swedes too, at one point, advocated holding a special General Assembly session to decide on additional invitations.

At the same time, the Swedes have shown great reluctance in becoming directly involved in any resolution of this problem. At a January 7 press conference the Swedish official in charge of conference preparations commented on the Soviet and Czechoslovak absence from the IWG to the effect that the conference would be "of less importance if the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries do not attend, particularly to us and other countries on the Baltic". Sweden was going ahead anyway. He noted that the solution of the GDR

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question could wait as late as May, since official invitations would not go out until spring; but he emphasized that it is the UN, not the Swedish government which was responsible for deciding who gets invited. His position seems to diminish hope that the West Germans could persuade the Swedes to work out some arrangement with the GDR.

Effect on Third World Countries.

The Brazilian UN delegation has used the imbroglio over the GDR invitation issue as a means of venting distrust of international environmental activity which it sees as adding prohibitive costs to developing nations' fledgling industries. The Brazilians have told Strong that they are considering boycotting the Stockholm Conference as well if the USSR and the East Europeans do not attend. Strong has persuaded them, however, to urge their government to refrain from implementing this threat until he has had a chance to talk with President Medici on his forthcoming visit to Brazil. Strong and others feel that if a major less-developed country like Brazil boycotted the Stockholm meeting, additional Third World defections might follow with the result of making the conference virtually meaningless.

Moscow's boycott tactics apparently are making headway, and the US can expect increased pressure, both foreign and domestic, for reaching a compromise with the Soviets. With no change in their respective positions, however, a direct US-Soviet confrontation over the issue of GDR participation seems unavoidable.

Soviets Not Bluffing.

While Soviet actions can be viewed as tactical maneuvering, on balance, Moscow does not appear to be bluffing. For one thing, environmental problems still remain low on the list of Moscow's priorities, reports of increased Soviet interest in the Stockholm Conference to the contrary. This being the case, the Soviets may have a bit of leverage on the Western allies, particularly the US, who want the Conference to succeed. Consequently, although the Soviets probably prefer not to have a direct confrontation with the US over GDR participation at this time, there appears little likelihood that the USSR will settle for anything less than official East German participation without voting rights and in any event will insist on parallel treatment of the GDR and the FRG.

In this context, the attendance of the People's Republic of China (PRC) at the conference raises the question whether the USSR could chance to leave such a potential propaganda forum as the Stockholm meeting to the Chinese.

Moscow already has displayed some sensitivity on this aspect by publicly contrasting the Soviet and Czechoslovak decision to withdraw from conference preparations with China's reported readiness to take part, despite the "discriminatory" participation formula. On the one hand, in light of Soviet détente policy in Europe, Moscow could at small cost to itself stick to its position in order to appease the East Germans and keep them in line during the ratification of the Polish and Soviet treaties with West Germany and the signing of the final quadripartite protocol of the Berlin agreement. On the other hand, in the broader area of Sino-Soviet rivalry, Moscow will have great difficulty in choosing between China and the GDR.

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